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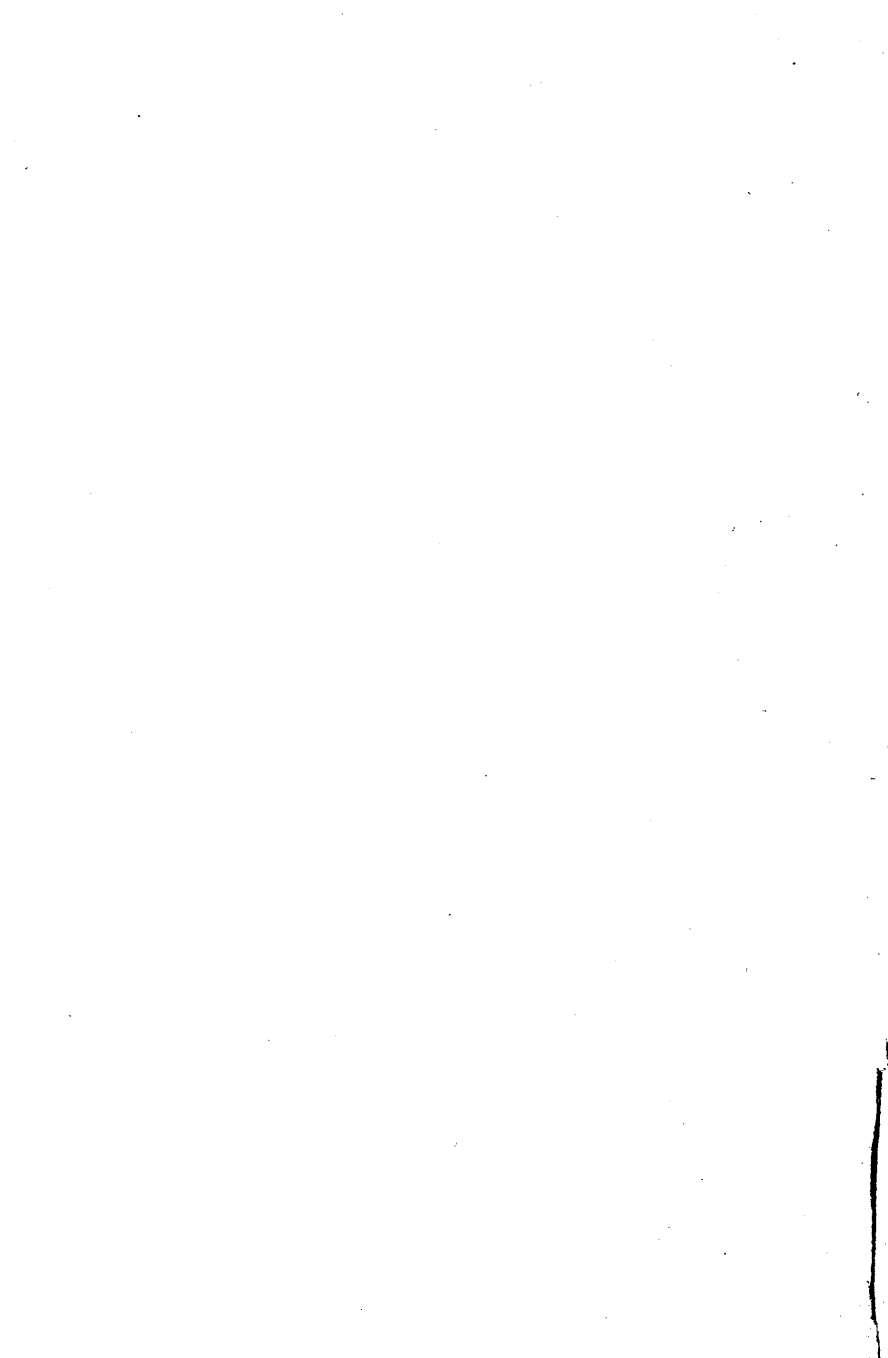
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MUST WE PART WITH GOD?



# MUST WE PART WITH GOD?

*A SHORT STUDY IN THEISM*

BY  
ERNEST F. CHAMPNESS

INTRODUCTION BY  
JOHN W. GRAHAM, M.A.

PRINCIPAL OF DALTON HALL

New York  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1925

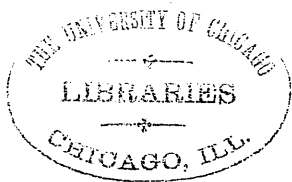
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THIS LITTLE BOOK  
OF THOUGHT AND ASPIRATION  
IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED  
TO ITS INSPIRER  
MY WIFE, AMY CELIA





## PREFACE

My object in writing this book has been to endeavor to present some thoughts which may be helpful to those in doubt and uncertainty, and to express these thoughts in as clear and concise language as I can command. I do not claim that my arguments are original, or that my thought is unbiased. Much consideration has been given by thinkers to this subject during the ages, and originality of thought is rare. Our best and deepest thoughts are generally part of our social heritage. That state of mental equilibrium which we so often praise as being impartial and free from bias is unsuited to the investigation of the significance of life. Thought follows experience; experience comes through the acceptance of life; it comes when we cease to be spectators and demand to take our place as actors, workers.

I do claim, however, that the thoughts and arguments in this book are no mere reproduction of the thoughts and ideas of others. This book

is a fragment of my spiritual autobiography; in it are recorded, in an informal and impersonal way, some of the logical steps by which I traveled the road which leads from a reverent Agnosticism to Theism. I make this statement in the hope that the information may help my readers to find an intense earnestness of purpose behind any imperfections of expression which they may discover.

A number of references have been given to the works of contemporary philosophers which it is hoped may be of use and interest to students of philosophy.

I gladly take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to Principal Graham, M.A., for his kindness in writing an introduction to this work.

Further, I desire to thank my friends, Mr. A. A. Davey, M.A., Mr. C. S. Fowler and the Rev. G. Coverdale Sharpe for the suggestions, encouragement and helpful criticism by which they so kindly aided my efforts.

E. F. C.

PARK LANE, WALLINGTON,  
SURREY, ENGLAND.  
1924.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is a pleasure to write a few words of introduction to this little book. It is a man's real Word, an utterance of what he has found concerning God and Man, in his individual search. Mr. Champness also possesses the gift of clearness in thought and style and freedom from redundancy which will carry his book straight home to the readers for whom it is written.

There must be many of these in this broken and confused post-war society of ours, men and women who, having been obliged to raise their anchors from ancient harbors of thought, have traveled to and fro in the dark without a chart, and may be glad of a beacon light built on the rock of experience which guides to a haven of Faith and Hope.

The author speaks modestly of his lack of originality. The book seems to me to be as original as most sound writings of this kind. Its value is not to be measured by its length.

JOHN W. GRAHAM.

DALTON HALL,  
MANCHESTER.



# Must We Part with God?

## CHAPTER I

### THE MENTAL WHIRLPOOL

THE aspirations of our young men and our young women have been crushed by the cynicism engendered by war. The armies have conquered, but the soul of man has been defeated. Can the soul yet be victorious? Can man arise from war's desolation and reach the highest life of joy? It is in the conviction that the real victory can be won, and that man can win his freedom, that these pages are written and offered to the public. In the writer's opinion the strange power in human affairs, which we call "Religion," associated as it is with the wildest fanaticism, and the most heroic devotion, with a terrible intolerance and a sublime beauty, is sufficiently powerful to bring us victory. This power, and this alone, is strong enough and constant enough to offer hope to the hopeless, guidance to the wanderer and energy to the indolent. Here, and here only, is there a possi-



bility of a passion arising which shall be so strong that it will be able to inhibit hatred and infuse a new life of joy into mankind.

The modern world can be likened to a whirlpool; all is in motion, but, alas! that motion has no conscious aim or purpose; theories are many, and the confusion of thought is great. Many people will confess freely that they do not know what they should do, or why they should trouble at all about life's problems. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which it may seem a paradox to describe our times under the simile of a whirlpool, for seldom in our history have the great masses of the people been more devoted to orthodoxy, or more eager to extend its power. The huge increase of the population which took place in the nineteenth century was followed by the erection of many new churches, especially in the great industrial areas. The Oxford Movement brought a fresh vigor into the Church of England; the Roman Catholics largely extended their foothold in this country; Methodism continued to grow in numbers and strength. The Moody and Sankey and other revivals, the Salvation Army, Church Army, Sunday Schools and Bands of Hope showed the vitality and power of an orthodox attitude which could be represented by the Apostles' Creed at the very least, and in most cases by a belief in the three Creeds. The religious organ-

ization which went beyond these limits, the Unitarian, or Free Christian Church, did not make rapid progress, or a wide appeal. Why then should it be necessary to consider the century's unbelief? Was it not rather remarkable that the English people as a whole remained, until nearly the end of that century, the bulwark of traditional Christianity in Western Europe? It is probably true that during the whole of the century there was much indifference in these matters, in particular, among the industrial classes, but indifference is not doubt, or disbelief. Such people conformed to just the extent that the public opinion of their circle demanded, and no more; otherwise they went on their own way. But mere indifference to religion is too inert, too flabby to affect the real life of a nation. That real life tended to be split in two. Until nearly the close of the century the popular active religious forces were on the whole conservative, but among the thinkers, scientists, philosophers and poets there were being conceived new ideas of such power that they have already, by the third decade of the twentieth century, shown that they are going to govern the development of religion in England. By way of illustration, let us recall the names of a few of the poets of last century. This will show how wide was the gap between the dogmatic certitude of the religious multitude

and the living thought of England. Shelley was completely in revolt against all conventional religious ideas, while his friend Keats ignored Christianity and wrote of a realm peopled with the gods and goddesses of Greece. Byron and Wordsworth were orthodox in form, but not in spirit. Matthew Arnold and Clough reveal minds attracted by faith, yet repelled by its forms. Tennyson passed through a phase of intellectual doubt. This is shown by *In Memoriam*. Robert Browning, the most strongly religious poet of his time, reveals a mind which one feels must have been developed, to some extent, in a struggle against doubt. Swinburne, William Morris, Tom Hood, W. E. Henley, Edward FitzGerald, James Thomson, Edward Carpenter and William Watson all express a disbelief in orthodoxy. One might justly add the American poets, Edgar Allan Poe, Longfellow, Lowell, Walt Whitman and Thoreau, all of whom were widely read here. At present there is no sphere of human life where the confusion of ideas and purposes is greater than in this very sphere of religion. The old orthodoxy is dying; the new religious ideas are often uncertain or shallow, and doubt naturally prevails. Large numbers of people have lost their faith in all forms of religion, still more are drifting aimlessly, giving a half-hearted assent to Christian teaching without having any real

and effective belief in its truth. It will throw some light on the movement away from organized religion, and its significance for us, if we endeavor to trace briefly the steps which man has taken in his endeavor to gain intellectual emancipation.

The history of the development of the human mind during the last two centuries has been to a large extent a description of the breaking away from the theology of the Middle Ages. Parallel with this movement there has been a groping after ideas to take the place of those which have been rejected and discarded. This period has produced several characteristic attitudes of disbelief and new belief. Any attempt to sum up in a few words so long a period, and one which was productive of a whole galaxy of great and sincere thinkers must of necessity be very partial; the advance of knowledge is never so steady and constant, so uniform and complete, that periods can be fixed with precision to each phase. Yet phases there have been, and it is necessary for our purpose to take a bird's-eye view of this development, and to give to each period a rough date:—

1. The Period of Deism . . . . . 1700-1789
2. The Period of Revolution and Reaction . . . 1789-1815
3. The Period of Literature . . . . . 1815-1859
4. The Period of Biology . . . . . 1859-1900
5. The Period of Psychology . . . . . 1900-

1. Deism arose from the spread of doubts

regarding the existence of a Special Providence. Science was just beginning its great discoveries, and the idea of Natural Law was increasing the difficulties of belief in a Particular Providence which ruled the Universe for our individual good. Looking at the facts of life, the Deist could not see that such things as miracles, or Divine interpositions, ever occurred. He asked for evidence—where was it? The earthquake at Lisbon in 1775 killed both good and bad people, indifferent to their prayers and their penitence. Nevertheless, the Deist saw a rational order in nature, from which he concluded that there was a reasonable Being, who was the Cause, the Creator of the Universe; otherwise how could the close and wonderful relationship between an organ and its function be explained? How was the ear adjusted to hearing, or the eye to seeing, if it was not made by a Being who understood both hearing and seeing? Such a God made the world, set it going; and he did his work so perfectly at the start, that no repair or alteration was necessary. Such a Divine Intelligence was separated from man, as man himself is separated by a huge gulf from a cog in the wheel of a machine which he has designed. Man has no relationship to the Divine, saving that in the far distant ages man, like everything else, was created by God. This was the first great adjustment of religion in

modern thought to the demands of science and reason.

2. The French Revolution produced an intense enthusiasm for humanity, and this very enthusiasm probably tended to decrease the interest in religion and its problems. As those inspired by this new ideal looked forward to the glorious future, they also looked back on the past, so full of crime and error, and felt a strong disgust for its shams and frauds, among which they included religion. They objected, not only to certain aspects of religion, as did the Deists, but to the religious idea itself. The Revolution, in its haste, produced much atheistic thought, but the reaction was at hand. The strain of the Napoleonic Wars, the association of Free Thought in the minds of the people with their national enemy, France, and the still remembered excesses of the Revolution, all tended to promote the feeling that only orthodoxy was safe. The Unitarian, Joseph Priestley, had opposed the French War. Tom Paine had sympathized with England's enemies. It was, therefore, argued that the heretics were not only profane; they were also disloyal. And what offense could be greater than disloyalty in the eyes of a patriotic people? There was yet another factor making for a religious conservatism; the influence of John Wesley, who taught a religion of emotion and passion. The

eighteenth century had been one of thought and criticism, and men had grown tired of such a spare spiritual diet. Wesley gave them the food they desired. Deism, Unitarianism—just tending to grow from many roots into a separate Church—and the increasing movement towards a re-statement of the creeds in the Church of England, were weakened by the might of the Methodist onrush. Man cannot live by reason alone.

3. Some of the old critical thought still continued after the Peace of Vienna, but its vitality had gone. In the new century fresh lines of thought were to be developed, and a great emotional movement was to be given to religion by the activity of the High Church Party. The chief features of the period from 1815 to the publication of the *Origin of Species* in 1859 were the quiet developments which took place in our knowledge of ancient literatures and civilizations. Scholars interested themselves in the literature of India, and in the monuments of Egypt and Babylon. The critical method of the comparative historian was applied to the Bible, and its relationship to other religions and literatures was carefully examined and considered. The miracle stories became the chief difficulty in the way of those who wished to believe in the old orthodoxy, but who found such belief was not easy.

4. This literary development extended throughout the whole of the century, but it is convenient to consider Darwin's great work as commencing a new era in thought with special difficulties and problems. The ideas of evolution expressed in England by Darwin, Wallace, Spencer and Huxley did not destroy the theistic position, but they made the alternatives more thinkable. To the Deists the argument from design was completely satisfying; but the Evolutionists presented a theory which professed to explain the delicate adjustment of organs to their functions without immediate reference to a Supreme Being. The doctrine of evolution is closely connected with the development of a naturalistic philosophy, which endeavored to account for the highest elements in man by referring them to the chance operations of early conditions of life. Man having a common descent with the man-like apes, it followed that those qualities which man possesses and the apes do not were accounted for on the assumption that they originally possessed some value for early man in enabling him to survive in the struggle for life. Hence, it was maintained that these very qualities had only a relative value, and in no way was man warranted in regarding them as having their basis and ground in the nature of the Universe itself. At bottom, they were only the result of chance



variations, which by chance had been preserved in the struggle for existence. Naturalism was in its essence a denial of the foundation of religion, and if its exponents often shrank from a dogmatic Atheism, the result was in no way affected: God, for all practical purposes, was driven from his Universe by this so-called scientific philosophy. Under the influence of such ideas the central problem connected with religion became the "God-idea" itself, for why should men trouble about the defense of the walls of the spiritual city when the citadel itself was being attacked?

The tendency of the century's thought was in the main destructive, leaving man's higher thought paralyzed by the increased knowledge of law and order in the Universe, giving less room for free will, spontaneity and prayer, and by its subordination of mind to matter, making the thought of God yet more remote. Science tended to conceive the material Universe as a closed self-contained system, and mind as dependent for its origin and activity upon that system. Man's aspirations were, therefore, subordinated to the assumed fixity of natural laws; man being born of necessity, for ever remained its child. The chief religious adjustment to such views was in the direction of Pantheism, though Pantheism was rarely found in a thorough-going form. Progressive religious

people believed that here there was a way out of the perplexities of faith, for by deifying the processes of nature, the widening gap between a scientific theory based on observed fact, and the idea of divine causation could be finally bridged. Goethe, under the influence of Spinoza, beautifully expressed this pantheistic tendency through the Earth Spirit in *Faust*:—

So schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit  
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid,

which has been translated as :

'Tis thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,  
And weave for God the garment thou see'st  
Him by.

Our Wordsworth has given a more spiritual interpretation to the same central thought in his well-known lines:—

. . . I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.

Most modern attempts to express a spiritual philosophy of life are indebted to this phase

of thought, and it is not the writer's wish to criticize here the poetic, or the idealistic forms of Pantheism, the latter being represented to some extent by the Neo-Hegelian thinkers. This one point: any form of Pantheism which approaches life from the point of view of the natural sciences, starting from matter as the firm and certain ground of existence, could construct no lasting bridge between science and religion. For if mind is completely dependent upon matter or energy for its being and its functioning, if mind is only an epiphenomenon, then no deification of nature can alter the relation of mind to matter. Man may be thus conceived of as a part of God, but the introduction of the divine name cannot for long hide the fact that, according to such a theory, man is after all only a slave of fate. "Pantheistic Naturalism" offers no solution, and it must be tried by the same logical judgments as we apply to undeified Naturalism.

5. Towards the close of the nineteenth century Psychology made great advances, and it is convenient to take the beginning of the twentieth century as roughly representing the time when Psychology became the outstanding interest of thought. The study of Psychology meant a reversal of the procedure by which thinkers started from matter and motion, and then applied the concepts thus gained to the considera-

tion of man. This procedure left no real place for mind in the Universe. The Psychologist reversed this order. He started from a consideration of the nature of mind and the behavior of men; thereby clearing the ground for a philosophy in which freedom, individuality, mind and duty were given an integral place, i.e. a philosophy which set out to interpret life as it is known and experienced by normal human beings. Man must be viewed as a growing, acting being; and the goal of this activity is the supreme consideration. This goal or end we cannot see as yet, hence the importance of those qualities of man which throw light on this end-reaching activity. Life thus viewed is, in the words of Dr. Ward, "a Realm of Ends." The key-thought of this book is that *the significance of life is partly revealed in the highest manifestations we know of that life, and these point to a Divine Purpose which is seeking fulfillment in and through us.*

In the future it may be seen that a fresh religious movement dated from the Peace of 1918, but in the author's opinion we have no warrant, at present, for asserting this. The war created no fresh intellectual problems. Did we not know in 1913 that intellect without love is cruel, and that the broad and generous feelings of a man of learning and culture can be

narrowed and debased by national hatred, which we miscall "Patriotism"? The war added nothing to religious knowledge; it merely crushed men's aspirations and benumbed their faith.

## CHAPTER II

### SOME ASPECTS OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

MANY attempts have been made to answer the question of the Psalmist: "What is man?" At times we feel that the most appropriate answer to this age-long problem would be—silence, for we feel that we are too insignificant to dare to attempt an answer. Others have tried and failed. Shall we, in our egotism, succeed in solving this problem of the ages? The attitude of all or nothing is false when applied to philosophy. Complete knowledge is not possible at present. If it is ever attained, it will be because we have valued highly the fragments of knowledge which we have learnt, or rather won, for the acquisition of knowledge requires, on our part, an effort akin to conflict. It is the object of this chapter to consider certain aspects of our personality with the purpose of trying to illuminate that sense of significance which man finds within himself.

The feeling that this subject is too ambitious and too difficult for us mortals is itself significant. What is man? Are we not men? Why, therefore, should we hesitate to give an answer to a question about ourselves? If we do not know anything of our own nature, is it not foolish to think of discussing those things which we only know less closely and less intimately—such as houses, or furniture, or our domestic pets? It is here suggested that our shyness in attempting to give an answer, even a partial answer, is due to the recognition that our life is deeper than we realize in our normal consciousness, and is rooted in the Divine. We feel about ourselves that we are greater than we know. Our nature is marked by restlessness: "A spark disturbs our clod," and we cannot set boundaries to our thoughts and be satisfied with the answers which are given within such limits. We try to step over the boundaries of ultimate questions themselves just as if we were doing what is natural to us, and what we have a perfect right to do. We think that everything must at some time have had a maker, and we therefore say that everything was in the beginning made by God—and we continue our thought with the question, "Who, then, made God?" This is no idle profanity; it reveals the questioning spirit as native to our minds. We feel that it cannot be for naught

that we ask such disturbing questions, for we know we cannot answer, and yet we still ask. One of Ernst Haeckel's books—*Die Welträthsel*—has been translated into English under the title, *The Riddle of the Universe*. Is not the title itself suggestive? We do not speak of riddles when we consider things which have no meaning. What are the implications of this word "riddle"?—a problem to be solved, a belief that the answer is intelligible, and a trust in the possibility of finding that answer. In this chapter the writer will try to show that man's nature is firmly grounded in the Divine, so that even in our ordinary thought that deeper foundation crops out, like granite on a moorland, revealing what is beneath. These hints of the vastness of life seem incompatible with any naturalistic theory.<sup>1</sup> In what savage warfare did the mind of Herbert Spencer become selected?—Spencer who so strongly condemned war. Did the personality of Jesus have any biological survival value? How could the vision of beauty of Michael Angelo, Rembrandt or Velasquez come as a result of training in the battle-fields of the jungle?<sup>2</sup> The cause is not connected with the result. Yet, if modern naturalism be true, such qualities must have

<sup>1</sup>See Earl Balfour in *Theism and Thought*, pages 27-32.

<sup>2</sup>Compare Prof. L. T. Hobhouse in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, Vol. I, pages 178-9.



had utility in the struggle for life, for how else could they have been evolved? It is not suggested that the conditions of human evolution have not to a large extent molded the human mind. The outstanding feature is that there has been an intelligence capable of being so shaped, and that this intelligence, though it bears the marks of the shaping process, transcends in its fuller developments the narrow limits of its mold. Thus we have a Spinoza or a Kant, a Shakespeare or a Milton, who show forth qualities of thought and being which seem to transcend that process of evolution on which they are based.

This age has been rich in writers who, from one point of view or another, have described the beauties of nature. The growth of extensive city areas, full of hideous squalor, has in many cases, by way of contrast, increased in the finer minds the feeling of delight in the simple beauty of the countryside. And not in such minds alone the flowers, the hills, the sea, the stars have become sources of delight. Such feelings are akin to religion. All this appreciation of the beautiful has for man an inner meaning, for therein his own nature is revealed; he shows his capacity for loving objects, movements, sounds and thoughts in which the beautiful is manifested.

Is it not remarkable that the stars on a clear

night should interest and fascinate us? Have they any mystic attraction for a tiger or a cow? In moments, which we are forced by our nature to regard as highest, we are moved by the splendors of a sunrise to a state of wonder in which life appears to the youthful to be transformed from a daily round of unromantic toil into an opportunity as rich in joy and possibilities as the sky is bright in lovely delicate tints. A sunset seen by the aged rekindles a genial wonder in the romance of life, the cares and worries being hidden for the moment behind the beautiful curtain of sky and cloud, and if the troubles return once more, are they not touched by the crimson of the sinking ball? Some men look upon a sunset, and henceforth they live a different life, perhaps a more restless one, because a new disturbing creative power has come into their lives, which must find expression in their personalities or remain a disturbing agitator.

Consider the coming of spring. After the cold round of winter the days lengthen, the light strengthens, and the rebirth of vegetation is awaited. When will it come—early or late? All seems nearly stationary for weeks; a few flowers blossom, the stalks shoot a little; yet how slow seems nature in her work. Then, with a sudden leap and bound, spring comes, and the hearts of men are glad. Within a week

the appearance of the countryside has been changed; the lovely violets, the primroses in the copses and by the wayside, the depths of color in the wild hyacinths, the tender green of the hedges, have all been brought into being by the kiss of the warm sunlight. The sleeper, Spring, has awakened and is arising from her wintry couch, dressed in brilliant hues. Animals, birds and men all welcome her in their particular way. The animals show greater energy and evident satisfaction, the birds sing the sweetest notes, but man welcomes her with an emotion made pensive by the recollection that after spring comes the heat of summer, and in the end winter comes round again. Yet to some, especially to those who do not see the country as deck-chair spectators, but as toilers in the fields through the dark and cold of winter, spring comes as a revelation of beauty, which moves the soul, showing depths of being hitherto unrealized.

We view a mighty cathedral; the sun shines upon its huge towers, which seem to glow in the light; windows, arches, statues of kings and saints, gargoyles and flying buttresses make a confusion of stone, delighting the eye and fascinating the mind. We seem to be in the presence of immensity; we feel small when we look upwards and see high above us masses of stone against the sky-line, and yet in spite of

our littleness, we are not crushed by the vastness of the building, for, we think, was it not built by man? We feel at home in the beauty of its decoration. Many styles of architecture are found in the building; many centuries were spent in erecting the different portions of the fabric; history is written in its walls, in its foundations, and on its floors. Could those walls speak we could well afford to destroy most of our books of history, for then we should hear a more vivid, more romantic and more truthful story. The walls would tell the truth; they would speak of ambition and intrigue, love and hatred, treachery and devotion, superstition and a faith which conquers fear and difficulty. Yet, in spite of the building's age and its vastness, we can feel it is a human product expressive of our aspirations, and we can regard it as we would an aged friend, with reverence and love. What aspirations and ideas does it express? It stands for the worship of a Being, whom no man has ever seen, and whose existence even we cannot prove, who is worshipped not here only, but also in every town and village in the land. It stands for the worship of a man who told his followers long ago to do many things which people rarely do or think of doing. He told them to love their enemies, to pray for those who persecuted them. He even had the audacity to speak of that Being as

“My Father” and “Our Father.” The life of the world has been richer and fuller since he lived and died. Strange, is it not? Man is a developed ape—yes—and what else? Or, if it is preferred, let it be asked what lay undeveloped in the ape which in man is growing into being!

Aspiration is the root of the higher nature of man; it is the conscious process by which he grows. Standing between the actual and the ideal, man sees in the latter a mental representation of what appears to him to be more desirable than that which at the moment is the actual, and he strives towards this ideal. The moral idealist often fails to recognize that if his ideal is no mere personal whim, or mistaken aim, it must be more expressive of the nature of the Universe than the actual. In other words, in order to be both desirable and attainable, it must be ultimately more than a social utility or an aim subjective only to the moral idealist's own mind. For what is socially useful will depend in essence upon the nature of man, and man cannot properly be treated as an isolated fact, for he is part of the Universe, and is the product of the evolution of that Universe. Likewise, nothing can be ultimately dismissed by the use of the word “subjective,” for what is subjective to us is a fact of the inner life of man, and from the point of view of higher

beings than ourselves must be counted as an objective fact, being part of man's nature or thought. Aspiration is present with us as a mighty force, and like other passions of life, it is often perverted from its highest uses and exploited for unworthy ends, yet it remains both the great power of life and a sign pointing our wandering steps to a life fuller and richer than that experienced in our normal existence.<sup>1</sup> It is an emphatic protest to all those who would bid us consider alone our practical duties, and leave on one side the great absorbing problems, which both fascinate and perplex. The words of Edwin Hatch:—

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Till I am wholly Thine,  
Till all this earthly part of me  
Glows with Thy fire divine.

show a yearning after holiness, which is characteristic of the best men in many religions, and also of a large number of earnest men who are not attached to any particular religious movement, and who would hesitate to call themselves by the name of the founder of one of the great historic religions.

No mention has been made so far of the lower qualities of man, or of those thoughts and feelings which are exhibited in every-day

<sup>1</sup>Compare Prof. A. S. Pringle-Pattison in his *Idea of God*—conclusion of chapter entitled "Man Organic to the World."

life by the normal human being. Such aspects must not be neglected in any complete study of man; they will keep us from readily believing that great benefits will come rapidly from quick improvements in political machinery; they will make it impossible for us to accept views of life which do not give an adequate place to the tragic elements of our existence—pain, sorrow, doubt, disappointed ambition, frustrated hope and death. Nevertheless, it is the higher, and not the lower qualities which point to the forward road. For us, in our state of development, the former have the greater significance; they are lights shining from the camps of the pioneers, which we can see in the distance in the far front. The latter are the ashes of their fires, which were once bright and warm, but now are cold. Our quest is with the pioneers.

In this chapter we have considered a few of the aspects of the higher life of man, such as intellectual curiosity, which is the basis of science, the love of the beautiful, from whence comes art, and aspiration, the basis of the moral life. Yet we have not answered the question, "What is man?" If we say:—

Curiosity + love of beauty + aspiration + man's lower  
qualities = man,

we have failed to construct an equation. No act of collecting qualities, or describing them,

placing them in order, or fitting them into a system, can truly describe man. Such a method serves one need; it clarifies our thought and brings into view the central mystery of our nature. However numerous may be our qualities, and whatever may have been their origin, as far as man understands himself at all, *he knows himself as a unity*. Our habit of ascribing various qualities to man is a way of distinguishing different aspects of that unity. Man sees himself as will, not will in the abstract, but as one particular self-conscious will, linked in many ways with other wills, yet distinct from them. Man's knowledge of himself reveals just that he is a self who wills, and his own self is not the self of his next-door neighbor, or even that of his nearest relation. In considering the various aspects of our personality, we intuitively view them in relationship to this unity of self. Even if at times we use language suggestive of the independent existence of the various faculties of the mind, we are clearly conscious on reflection that our true thought is not being expressed, for such faculties only have their meaning for us within, and as part of, our complete consciousness. Psychology has introduced, or re-introduced, us to the idea of double and variable personalities, but it must leave unshaken this direct consciousness of selfhood, which the normal man possesses. The



self of man remains; it is enlarged and glorified in moments of inspiration, narrowed and restricted in times of depression. Whether the field of consciousness be temporarily wide or narrow, or the center of consciousness be situated in one part of that field or another, that center is still *the self*, which relates the whole of the conscious activities within that field to itself. In the chapter entitled "The Enfolding Spirit" it will be necessary to place considerable emphasis on the importance of the marginal activities of the mind, but in so doing we must be careful that the primary fact of our consciousness, the unity of the self which wills, be not obscured by weighty, though but secondary, considerations.

### CHAPTER III

## AGNOSTICISM—AN UNSTABLE EQUILIBRIUM

EVERY writer who bases his arguments on reason and experience is forced to admit that his knowledge is very limited; he sees a little way, but beyond that he is unable to discern any objects with clearness, while in the far distance his vision comes to a point where it ceases, and he can see no farther. To different people the fact of the limitation of knowledge suggests various attitudes towards life. Some feel that our ignorance only calls us to deeper thought or the making of more careful experiments. Others think that knowledge is not worth the trouble necessary to obtain it, because our chance of finding veins of pure gold is too remote. Some also feel that the whole subject of the Divine Purpose is so profound and so far beyond our finite grasp that a reverent ignorance is alone possible. In this chapter our consideration must be given to a class of people

who value the discoveries of science, and welcome them with enthusiasm, for in so far as such men and women possess a hopeful outlook for the race, that outlook is based on science and the acceptance of scientific teaching. Yet they are unable to believe that our intellect is of any use in solving the ultimate problems of existence. To the whys, whences and whithers of life we can only stand mute or repeat, "We cannot know." Such an attitude represents a division of life into two parts, the knowable and the unknowable; to the former belongs science, and to the latter religion and all ultimate philosophy. This division of life is not a mere accident; it comes from the theory that mind cannot investigate anything beyond itself, that it is restricted by its own limitations. Herbert Spencer, in *First Principles*, quotes Sir William Hamilton as follows: "For, as the greyhound cannot outstrip his shadow, nor (by a more appropriate simile) the eagle outsoar the atmosphere in which he floats, and by which alone he may be supported; so the mind cannot transcend that sphere of limitation, within and through which exclusively the possibility of thought is realized." Our minds are finite, and the infinite is, therefore, above and beyond our ken. Why attempt to know what is in the nature of things beyond our powers?

We are entitled to ask why ultimate problems

should be dismissed from our interest and our investigation, for such a rejection rests upon the assumption that the basic facts of existence are not mental, otherwise they would be knowable. It is just upon the belief that such facts are ultimately mental that the Theist in religion, and the Idealist in philosophy, construct their theories: the one by introducing mind as a first cause, and the other by maintaining that matter itself is, in a final analysis, a form of mind, or is dependent upon mind. We have two assumptions; the agnostic that we can never know whether mind is behind phenomena or not, which, at the start, excludes its being so, because if it were, then we should have the possibility of such knowledge, and the theistic or idealistic assumption that the Universe is ultimately rational. The implication of science, as far as it has yet investigated and penetrated, is that the Universe is rational, otherwise our investigations, conducted on a rational basis, could not be successful. The term "laws of nature" is expressive of this order, which our mind finds in natural phenomena; an order which, if it be truly known to our minds, must be finally and ultimately of the same mind nature. The difference between the Agnostic and the Theist on this point is that the Agnostic recognizes that our mind has been successful in understanding part of the mechanism of the

Universe, but he insists that a knowledge of mechanism does not throw any light on the problems of the origin and meaning of that mechanism, while the Theist accepts the implications of scientific thought that the Ultimate Cause is rational, and that rationality is not limited to the effects only, but can be traced back to the Cause. Agnosticism has come into being as a definite philosophy in association with the doctrine of evolution and the idea of universal causation, that is, with concepts which lead to the belief in a cosmos, and not a chaos. In a word, Agnosticism was in the main monistic in its leanings. But this makes its dualism—the knowable and the unknowable—seem even more strange, for if this dualism is real, there must be some difference in kind between the knowable and the unknowable, which is contrary to the concepts with which Agnosticism is mostly allied. Again, even to the Agnostic the unknowable can be only partially unknown, for in order to declare that it is unknowable he must himself know something of the qualities and nature of that unknowable. Agnosticism, as a definite philosophy, based on strict logic, is as much a piece of dogmatism as the Athanasian Creed.<sup>1</sup> It is true that Spencer believed that

<sup>1</sup>Dean Hastings Rashdall in his *Philosophy and Religion* writes of the "Agnosticism which rejects probabilities because we cannot have immediate certainties, and insists on knowing nothing because we cannot know everything."

a vague consciousness of the unknowable was implied in knowledge, but to that extent "the unknowable" was a misleading term for him to use. Perhaps this indefinite consciousness of the so-called "unknowable" is the basic fact of life.

It follows from the Agnostic's reasoning that much more must remain unknowable than the Ultimate Realities. According to his logic, time, space, matter and energy, considered in their ultimate nature, are also beyond the reach of our understanding. For instance, all that we know of matter consists of impressions which our senses color and shape in the act of perception. We do not know matter; we only know the appearance which matter has when interpreted by our minds in the very process of knowing. Therefore, we know only matter plus mind, and not matter by itself, that is, as it is in itself, apart from distortions arising from the fact that our senses and our minds are just what they are. Nevertheless, we do to some large extent make use of matter or energy, irrespective of any theory which we may hold, which says that we cannot know it as it is. We listen to a wireless entertainment and remain unperturbed by our ignorance of the fundamental nature of electricity; we merely use it. In like manner is it not possible that man can use the unseen spiritual forces, al-

though he remains in ignorance of their real nature? The Divine comes to man as the spiritual power, and on this fact he can base his life, even if the ideas of the Agnostics in common with Kant and others, regarding the nature of perception, are correct.

The term Agnosticism is frequently used, however, in a more general sense. The thinker comes up against the unanswered problems of life, finds the solutions offered by the various "isms" inadequate, bows his head before the mystery, and finds a temporary peace in the contemplation of the weakness of logic and the unfathomableness of life. There have been periods in the lives of many good and thoughtful men and women when life, as it appeared to them, could be compared to the sparrow mentioned by Bede, which at the feast enters the banqueting hall, and in the twinkling of an eye is gone again:—

Even like this little moment's space appears  
The life of man; what has gone before  
Or that which follows after, we know not.

Such an attitude is not founded on logical considerations, though often it is encouraged by the destructive use of logic; it springs in the main from more primitive faculties of our nature than formal reasoning about certain limited aspects of knowledge. Whatever the

origin of this attitude, it cannot express a permanent and stable state of mind. There is in human nature at its best and fullest an inward urge to transform the "we know not" into "we know."

We must have a basis for our activity, and if this cannot be found in complete knowledge, we are compelled to find it in knowledge less than complete. Intelligent action requires, or implies, a theory of life which is broad and deep enough to form a basis for such activity. The Agnostic is compelled to adopt an ethical theory which is largely hedonistic, that is, one based on the idea of pleasure; he cannot formulate one founded on considerations wider than man's well-being. Of course, an ethical theory which is unrelated to human utilities, and is advocated only in the interest of supposed divine values, would be absurd. But the demand of man's spirit is for a doctrine of morality which is based on human well-being and growth, but which finds its sanctions and its power in the belief that human well-being is expressive of an eternal order, which includes man, and yet at the same time transcends him, such an eternal order being for man best vindicated and manifested in man's ideals and aspirations. This the Agnostic cannot give. The Theist produces weighty arguments, some of which are to be considered later, but these do not



amount to proof; the problems of suffering and of evil being still unanswered.

What are we to do when faced with the inadequacy of Agnosticism, and the failure of Theism, at present, to satisfy our intellect completely? We can do just what the scientist does: frame a hypothesis and test it, not by its logical coherence, which is a test that can only be applied when our knowledge is more complete, but by its value for life, its workability. Let us call such a hypothesis, made for ultimate realities, by the time-honored word, "Faith." Faith is thus less than full knowledge, but it is more than a guess, because it is based on what knowledge we have, and it can be tested by experience. To one of his stories teaching the value of love Tolstoy has given the title, "What men live by." Tolstoy's title is appropriate in this connection, for our rational conduct is based on our assumptions regarding life's meaning and significance. Men live the higher life of the mind by faith, i.e. by trusting the light which they have found in reason and experience and then acting in that light. The faith here denoted can be illustrated by a scene from a mountain top. Below is a wonderful panorama of lakes, valleys, towns, villages and mountains turbaned in snow; the view is glorious and inspiring, when, suddenly, the vast landscape is blotted out by clouds, which have

rapidly formed around the mountain side, and, in an instant, the beautiful scene is no more. All one can see is the ground at one's feet, and the clouds, thick clouds, through which the vision cannot penetrate. Just as suddenly once more the clouds lift and expose to view the glorious scenery several thousand feet below. Is not this a parable of life? We see a great vision, and then the clouds come over us, and all is blotted out. Faith is the belief that the clouds are only unsubstantial vapor and merely hide the solid land from our sight. Emerson, in his essay on "Illusions," wrote: "There is no chance and no anarchy in the Universe. All is system and gradation. Every god is there sitting in his sphere. The young mortal enters the hall of the firmament; there is he alone with them alone, they pouring on him benedictions and gifts, and beckoning him up to their thrones. On the instant, and incessantly, fall snowstorms of illusions. He fancies himself in a vast crowd which sways this way and that, and whose movement and doings he must obey: he fancies himself poor, orphaned, insignificant. The mad crowd drives him hither and thither, now furiously commanding this thing to be done, now that. What is he that he should resist their will, and think and act for himself? Every moment new changes and new showers of deceptions to baffle and distract

him. And when, by and by, for an instant, the air clears and the cloud lifts a little, there are the gods still sitting around him on their thrones—they alone with him alone.” Faith is the belief that the gods are on their thrones all the time, though they cannot be seen: there, though unseen, like the stars at daytime.

In life’s moral and spiritual battles neutrality is impossible. The man who does not formulate a faith cannot avoid making his choice; indeed, he has chosen already, for whatever may be his formal beliefs, the effective belief, the assumption on which he acts, is one which ignores the claims of the highest. He may go to church regularly on Sunday, or he may call himself an Atheist; it makes little difference to his real faith what name he selects. In agnostic literature one finds evidence of this desire for intellectual neutrality, and sees evidences of the instability of thought thereby involved. Agnosticism is like *an unstable equilibrium*,<sup>1</sup> ever tending to realize stability and thereby destroying the equilibrium, moving on the one hand towards Theism, and on the other towards Materialism or Naturalism. Huxley and Spencer say, in word or in effect, that if they were compelled to choose between Philo-

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Ward has used this expression of psychophysical parallelism.

See Prof. A. S. Pringle-Pattison’s treatment of this subject in his book, *Man’s Place in the Cosmos*.

sophic Idealism or Philosophic Materialism, they would select the former, and then they use the language of the latter because it is considered more expressive and more easily understood. In pure theory they incline towards Idealism, but their terminology is that of Materialism. They avoid the acceptance of the conclusions of either system, for, in their opinion, neither can be expressive of the Ultimate, and at the best either can be only relatively true. Hence the term "Agnostic" has always meant different things to different persons. To one it is almost synonymous with "Theist," while to another it has the same meaning as "Materialist." These differences of attitude found associated with the same name do not mainly spring from any misunderstanding of its original meaning. The Agnostic proposes that we should take up an attitude of neutrality towards those things which are too vital to our spirits to admit of a permanent attitude of indecision. A mental decision is made, either a faith is formulated, or it is swept aside, but the name Agnostic is often retained in both cases, and thus the same word is made to express a vague faith<sup>1</sup> or a virtual denial of God.

Agnosticism is often a phase in the develop-

<sup>1</sup> The late Dr. Sylvanus Thompson in his book, *A Not Impossible Religion*, has aptly used the term "Impersonal Theists" to express the attitude of people holding such a faith.

ment of a man's thought, a phase which is both necessary and wholesome. Consider the nature of doubt. It is neither belief nor disbelief; when in doubt our minds are attracted by two or more alternatives which seem desirable. At one time we are attracted by the one and repelled by the other, but in a short time the parts are interchanged. No final decision is reached; the doubter has neither peace of mind nor rest of soul. Doubt is a good tonic, but a poor food. The human spirit craves definite beliefs or definite disbeliefs; the judgment cannot remain for ever suspended, always desiring a decision, but never making it. Agnosticism is just this spirit of doubt applied to ultimate things and made into a philosophy. Yet most of those people who call themselves Agnostics are not really so. Presented with the great alternative, God or no God, they have in a dim way already made their choice, though its nature and scope has not been clear to them.

This chapter has been written to point out the inadequacy of Agnosticism, and it is fitting that it close with a quotation from Herbert Spencer, when in a mood sympathetic to Theism.<sup>1</sup> It is taken from his *Education*: "Sad indeed, is it to see how men occupy themselves with trivialities, and are indifferent to the grandest phenomena—care not to understand the

<sup>1</sup>See the philosophical writings of John Fiske.

architecture of the heavens, but are deeply interested in some contemptible controversy about the intrigues of Mary, Queen of Scots!—are learnedly critical over a Greek ode, and pass by without a glance that grand epic written by the finger of God upon the strata of the earth.” But the finger of God has written not only the grand epic upon the strata of the earth, a greater epic is written in the personality of man, whose mind understands some of the architecture of the heavens, and who can read some verses of the epic written in the strata of the earth.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

THIS chapter is not occupied with the discussion of the origin of the Universe and the problems relating to the creation of matter or energy out of nothing; in this direction very little light is to be seen at present, and its consideration would only be making unnecessary and unprofitable difficulties. It therefore seems better to leave such problems on one side. Further, no attempt will be made to advance any views regarding the nature of time or space. The Universe is, and we exist as a part and product of that Universe. Our problem is just this—have we sufficient grounds for the belief that the Universe is in its ultimate essence rational, and that it is not indifferent to our aspirations? The same thought can be put thus: is not our total experience of such a kind that we are forced to trust life, to believe that we are organic to the Universe, and that our deepest thoughts are grounded in that Universe, which

is our home? The term "Creative Spirit" is used here to give figurative expression to the thought that the inner life of the Universe creates an order which we call "law," and, further, it creates within us a sense of values, giving significance to our lives and relating them to the law and beauty-giving process which we see revealed in nature.

First, let us follow the clue of law.<sup>1</sup> The "laws of nature" as discovered by science, are often more than generalizations regarding phenomena. Man has observed varied phenomena, and has found principles which simplify the understanding of the effects which he has observed. This recurring order the scientist calls by the name of "law," a word the ambiguity of which is responsible for much confusion of thought. The real importance of law is that it can often be expressed in terms of mathematics, i.e. of pure reason. Man has reason; material nature is itself neither rational nor irrational, because it is not conscious, but the order which it reveals is rational, at least as far as we have been able to test, which points us to a rational cause, or to an inner rationality manifested externally in matter. Man's conception of law comes from his attempt to express this order which matter reveals. Laws are, in the

<sup>1</sup>See Prof. Aliotta's treatment of this subject in his work translated under the title *The Idealistic Reaction Against Science*.



first place, convenient subjective generalizations, but to the extent that they are true, they express the objective order of nature. The mathematical character of many laws of nature carries us forward to the conception that the Ultimate is rational, on the assumption, however, that the discoveries of science are not delusions of our minds, or creations of our imaginations. Nature seems to have the impress of reason upon her; the truth of science is tested by practical results, that is, theories based on mathematical deductions lead the way to verifiable results. If nature is not expressive of a rational order, how explain the laws of motion and gravitation on which modern astronomy is based? The best known example of the use of our conception of law is the finding of the planet Neptune. The orbit of Uranus showed certain irregularities which were studied by J. C. Adams and Le Verrier, and both came to the conclusion independently that these perturbations were caused by the attraction of a yet undiscovered planet. Adams spent three years in studying the problem, and in making calculations. In 1846 he stated the approximate position of the unseen planet, and when it was discovered by means of the telescope it was found near where Adams had stated it would be seen. Le Verrier's prediction, made without any collaboration with the English mathematician, was

so accurate that the size of the new planet's disk agreed with his forecast, and the heliocentric longitude agreed within fifty-seven degree minutes. This was a truly wonderful discovery, valuable for its own sake, and for its confirmation of the trustworthiness of the human mind, which it helped to strengthen. Kepler, who spent his life considering the movements of the planets, formulated three laws summing up his work; these are known as "Kepler's Laws." In a moment of deep insight he wrote, "O God, I think over again Thy thoughts after Thee." This was the triumphant thought of a man who had struggled hard, who had formulated a theory which he had been forced to abandon, but who had at last seen the light of Truth. About three centuries have since passed: the movements of the planets, and to a much less extent the stars, their distances, their sizes and even their chemical composition are in many cases known to us dwellers on this relatively tiny revolving ball. Astronomy reveals to us a Universe, which we are understanding more and more; therefore the Universe is one whose order is understandable by our minds—a rational Universe. Here we have two factors, a Universe with a rational order, and the power of investigating it possessed by the human reason; the degree of success which has attended this investigation is evidence for the truth of both

of these factors, for each taken alone, without the other, is meaningless to us. This thought leads us back again to Kepler's words. The rational order in the movements of the heavenly bodies is there because the "Creative Spirit" so "ordered" the Universe, and man is capable of knowing and understanding, to the degree that he has yet been able, because that same Creative Spirit breathed into man "the breath of life," i.e. reason and understanding among other qualities. Many people feel crushed by the immensity of the starry heavens. The vast distances and the long durations of time of which astronomers write have made more Agnostics than all formal arguments put together. But such a philosophy, based on the vastness of space and time, is false; man's spirit need not bend under the weight of the stars, if these stars and their order can be seen as the "thoughts" of the Creative Spirit, whose child is the human spirit. Let us rejoice, for in the song of the stars there is gladness: hope has been rightly symbolized as a star.

Reason is a faculty which was developed late in the evolution of life. About the same time as reason, other faculties appear in man, which powers, though very different from reason, are yet closely associated with that faculty. The sense of beauty and the moral sense spring into being closely linked with reason in man's

growth. But reason, as we have seen, is not a chance product of the evolutionary process; it is the very ground of the Universe; it was involved in life itself before man was. Evolution is the method by which qualities, already involved, i.e. existing as potentialities, became manifest. Therefore, we may infer that the æsthetic and moral faculties, like reason, are based in the nature of the Universe. The Creative Spirit breathed them also into man, and man is becoming a living soul. These other faculties, like reason, have small survival value; as far as we can tell they do not exist to any large extent among the animals; they spring from the depths of our being and show an amazing rapidity of growth. These three seem outside and beyond our utilities, and upon them is based the framework of the higher life of man. Before they appeared religion was not, nor philosophy, nor art, nor science. With their dawn come strange questionings and attempts to represent the Eternal to the imagination of man by words or forms, which in time become superceded by more rational and less anthropomorphic words and forms. Religion is born in man of the dawning sense of ultimate qualities in himself, of man's possession of attributes, which he can only account for by ascribing them to the work of gods. Man's conception of the nature of his gods alters and expands,

widens and deepens until man sees the Universe as God's handiwork, his own life as a divine germ, and his life's purpose as a growth. The evolutionary process seems to have produced many forms which have not survived; for instance, huge reptiles came into existence, but are now extinct. Considerations of this kind have led many people to speak of a "life force," meaning thereby a vital power which is so much lower than consciousness that it has no clear plan or scheme, yet in an instinctive manner, working as an artist does with an increasing realization of an aim, it produces forms of beauty and intelligence. The philosophy of M. Henri Bergson has much in it which is attractive, but it misses the thought which for the present writer is central and to which he has been trying to give expression. Man's higher faculties are reached by means of a process which has produced many by-products, but these higher faculties are not themselves by-products; they are the products of terrestrial development. Our power to understand some of the mechanism of nature is the pledge of the ultimate rationality and trustworthiness of life, the rainbow given as God's promise to man.

It may be objected that the writer has assumed that the Creative Spirit is like unto man, and that instead of the Creative Spirit having created him, he has created the Creative Spirit.

It must be replied that any idea of the Ultimate possessed by man must assume some degree of likeness between that Ultimate and man, for man's mind can only think of an object in terms of itself. This limitation, however, is no final logical barrier to those who find in their analysis of experience weighty reasons for maintaining that God in producing man places some of his own nature within his creature. This does not mean that God is like, or acts like, a magnified human being; such a conception belongs to the theology of the past. The Creative Spirit is. What is involved in such Being cannot be even pictured by us. Man is only becoming, achieving, winning through, realizing himself. Man looks within and sees dimly the core of his being; of this fundamental and central part of man's nature it is claimed that it is the expression of the divine will, and to that extent, like that will. God's will for man, however, is not conformity to an iron law; it is not fate; it is growth, and growth is an inward process, bringing its own revelations, demanding its own sacrifices, creating its own ideals. If the objection be pressed that references to "God's will" or the "Creative Spirit" are too anthropomorphic, it must be replied that the only alternative is to give up thinking altogether. Language is limited and we must use it as best we can. Dr. James Martineau's words are helpful: "But

the confession of our ignorance once made, we may proceed to use such poor thought and language as we find least unsuitable to so high a matter; for it is the essence and beginning of religion to feel that all our belief and speech respecting God is untrue, yet infinitely truer than any non-belief and silence." We must boldly claim the right to use those words which seem best fitted to express our thought, and are willing to recognize that language, like human life, is not complete, but it is growing and evolving, but nevertheless the qualities of language and life are based on real though limited apprehensions of an ideal world.

The Creative Spirit may be considered as the creator of values as well as the creator of law.<sup>1</sup> We make various mental estimates or valuations of our acts and our emotions; we say they are high or low; we arrange them according to a scale, placing them in order of degree. And often we are unable to give good reasons why we so act, or why one virtue, or class of virtues, should be placed above others, or one type of pleasure said to be low and degrading, and a different kind elevating. In any discussion of the ultimate things of life, this problem of value persists; it cannot be explained on naturalistic grounds, because it rests above,

<sup>1</sup>Compare Canon Quick's article in the *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1923—*Value as a Metaphysical Principle*.

or outside, the struggle for life so that the Naturalist finds it difficult to adduce sufficient reason for its existence. Shall we say that the Creative Spirit, in giving man the power to live and achieve goodness, truth and beauty, gave him also the power to arrange the various degrees of these qualities in a definite order, to examine, to criticize and to judge their rank and value? That is a statement which ignores the particular circumstances of their development in each individual, yet it possesses the merit of claiming this habit of the human mind as one having ultimate significance. Just as our mind reads the story of the stars, so it also estimates the degree towards perfection which the human soul has attained in its growth. *There is a valuation of all the values of life which we often make; and in doing this we give life the supreme value of significance.* As we analyze our own minds, especially in those moments which we regard as our greatest, we discern a coherence, springing from a sense that the various values which we place on our actions and emotions form a connected whole. They do not make several systems, but are like the planets revolving round one central sun. They have their origin and meaning in our central being, our ego. We feel that our being, having all these qualities, possesses meaning. The evolutionary process has put so much into



us, and has done so in such a wonderful way, that something is signified by us and in us. We view purpose in the actions of others, and we know purpose as an element in our own lives, and all this means that our lives and work have a significance for us. Finding so much in ourselves, though we cannot explain it, or even satisfactorily express our thoughts regarding it, we feel that the Universe, so wonderful and beautiful, cannot have less meaning. *As we find this meaning in our own limited personalities, we say that the Universe, of which we are but a part, must have even greater meaning and significance. We feel that the significance which we see in ourselves is a reflection of the Eternal Significance.*<sup>1</sup>

The argument can be put thus: Because the human intellect has discovered some of nature's secrets there is good reason to trust in the validity of the considered judgments made by the whole personality of man, the most important of which is the judgment of meaning or significance. Each human being is a unity of closely related faculties, but the whole is something quite different from any single faculty. Indeed, any faculty apart from the whole is only an abstraction, for the central uniting ego

<sup>1</sup>See Prof. John Baillie's splendid treatment of this subject in his article, *The True Ground of Theistic Belief*—*Hibbert Journal*, October, 1922.

is missing. This judgment of significance, based on our inner experience of the unity of related parts, we transfer to the Universe and claim that such a transference is valid because science has to some extent confirmed the validity of our theories of physics by showing that they can be proved by practical results.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ENFOLDING SPIRIT

THE arguments thus far advanced have led us to what might be described as "Deism plus Evolution." The Creative Spirit is producing man by endowing him, the growing being, with potentialities, which are not alien to, but correspond with, the ultimate nature of the Universe. But does the Divine stand nearer to man than suggested above? An orthodox Christian poet, Francis Thompson, has written:—

O World invisible, we view thee,  
O World intangible, we touch thee,  
O World unknowable, we know thee,  
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!  
Does the fish soar to find the ocean,  
The eagle plunge to find the air—  
That we ask of the stars in motion  
If they have rumor of thee there?  
Not where the wheeling systems darken,  
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—  
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors,

The angels keep their ancient places;—  
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!  
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,  
That miss the many-splendored thing.

Do we in reality touch this "World intangible"? The answer of common sense is "No"; pure reason is dumb. The spiritual experience of the wise men of the race answers "Yes." Consider a quotation from Principal L. P. Jacks' Hibbert Lectures, *Religious Perplexities*: "All religious testimony, so far as I can interpret its meaning, converges towards a single point, namely this. There is that in the world, call it what you will, which responds to the confidence of those who trust it, declaring itself, to them, as a fellow-worker in the pursuit of the Eternal Values, meeting their loyalty to it with reciprocal loyalty to them, and coming in at critical moments when the need of its sympathy is greatest; the conclusion being, that wherever there is a soul in darkness, obstruction or misery, there is also a Power which can help, deliver, illuminate and gladden that soul. This is the Helper of men, sharing their business as Creators of Value, nearest at hand when the worst has to be encountered; the companion of the brave, the upholder of the loyal, the friend of the lover, the healer of the broken, the joy of the victorious—the God who is spirit, the God

who is love." Consider also these words from Rabindranath Tagore's *Sādhana*: "As the child in its mother's womb gets its sustenance through the union of its life with the larger life of its mother, so our soul is nourished only through the good which is the recognition of its inner kinship, the channel of its communication with the infinite by which it is surrounded and fed." William James wrote: "We hear in these days of scientific enlightenment a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of prayer; and many reasons are given us why we should not pray, whilst others are given us why we should. But in all this very little is said of the reason why we do pray . . . . The reason why we do pray is simply that we cannot help praying."

In these quotations we have the expression of the belief in prayer, or a state of devotion closely resembling prayer, from men possessing widely different outlooks and holding varied opinions.

It is useless for men to urge that such an attitude is superstitious, or that it is merely a relic of the past. To those who have felt the power and healing of prayer, the peace of prayer, such accusations seem to be the result of spiritual ignorance. It is like a man with no appreciation of color saying that a picture by Turner is little more than a daub of paint, or a

man with no sense of music criticizing Beethoven. On this subject, there is and must be, a real gap in *formal* thought between the man who prays and one who does not. It is a gap which no argument can, or ought, to bridge. One thing only can make a man truly believe in prayer, and that is prayer itself. Prayer is part of the Great Adventure of life; here, even more than in the things of the intellect, the seeker goes forward and tests his actions and his life by the results. In the struggle and stress of life, when we seem to have reached the extremity of our power and endurance, the impulse to pray comes upon us, and it is the testimony of the adherents of many religious systems that this impulse, when followed, does bring satisfaction in the end. The hard, stubborn facts of life remain unaltered, but a change takes place in the person who meets them with prayer; a new strength comes, and life's problems are seen in a fresh light. Prayer produces a slow or sudden change in us, and we become more like what we aspire to be. St. Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*: "Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee." By the means of prayer we feel more sure that God has made us for Himself and we are helped to find our rest in Him. Much has been written here of life's incom-

pleteness: prayer is the completer of our lives, because it brings our unfulfilled aspirations into a realm which is above our strife and petty jealousies. When it was fully realized that many of the old rocks contained fossils, which seemed to be allied in structure to existing plants and animals, the young science of Geology was faced by the alternative, that, either such fossils pointed to the existence of life on the earth ages ago, and threw doubt on the literal rendering of the account of the Creation in Genesis, and would cause, therefore, the belief in the Bible story to be given up; or, on the other hand, the significance of the existence of the fossils must be explained away by some such theory as that they were placed in the rocks by the Almighty at the Creation of the World. Geologists chose the course which meant freedom of thought, and we believe the vindication of truth. A similar choice awaits us. Many of those people who now claim to be on the side of Geology have minds which have not really advanced much since the days of Lyell; the progress of thought finds them where their ecclesiastical opponents once were. Such people who, in the name of Rationalism, start from a theory of knowledge which in advance excludes the use of reason for the purpose of constructing an ultimate philosophy, would deny the validity of the testimony of our deepest experience to the

value of prayer. The evidence of prayer is inward and personal, by its essential nature it does not readily admit of demonstration; mathematical and exact methods can neither calculate nor measure it. Accordingly, we are told by some that prayer is invalid. Love and beauty, wonder and awe can also neither be calculated nor measured. We experience them, and in that experience of ours they are known and comprehended. Their power is felt, though they cannot be clearly explained. Even their existence cannot be satisfactorily demonstrated to any person who lacks the informing experience; yet this reality is beyond any need of demonstration to those who have such experience. Many popular theories of life would make the habit of prayer difficult or impossible, and exponents of such theories often attack the idea of prayer with the energy of a revivalist preacher. We must fit our theories to what seems to us to be the facts, and not deny those facts because, if the facts were admitted, there might be awkward gaps in our theories. Experience precedes logic; philosophy is the grammar of life; but before grammar comes language, which is an attempt to express experience in words. In claiming the right to pray we do what the Geologists did; we stand by our experience of life, regarding it as real, or at least as a gateway to the real, and we



choose the road of freedom. Prayer is a vital function of the higher life, and in any attempt to discover the significance of life we must see the life of man in the light of prayer. As man feels the need of prayer, we must postulate a Universe which is so ordered as to give rise to the intuition of prayer in man, and further, a Universe in which such an attitude can, and does, meet with an inward response. Deism, whether in its eighteenth or twentieth-century phases, is inadequate to the soul's needs; it can never be truly a religion, because it can find no legitimate place for prayer.

Certain kinds of prayer do not appeal to the modern mind. We know too little as yet of the relationship of mind to matter to dogmatize regarding prayer for material things, but it can be safely said that such prayer presents huge difficulties. Few people who approach the problem of prayer from the standpoint of physical science believe in its efficacy as a *direct* means for achieving material ends. In any case, there is no *vital* connection between such prayer and the life of the soul. The intellectual difficulties in the way of a belief in prayer are serious, but they become less serious the higher we make our conception of prayer. Prayer in its highest form is communion between man and the Unseen, what is here poetically called "The Enfolding Spirit." Paul, speaking of the Divine,

used the expression "in Whom we live, move and have our being." The highest form of prayer is the communion between our being and this greater Being; such prayer asks neither for wealth, fame, nor miracles; it accepts the physical Universe as being an expression of an eternal order, and asks for courage, trust, truth, insight and love. Such prayer assumes a close connection between our spirit and the Enfolding Spirit; it assumes also that our aspirations, sorrows and joys are not solitary, but are realized by that Spirit.

Prayer is a co-operative act between our finite selves and a larger Self. If we expect to possess moral or spiritual qualities, merely because we ask for them in prayer, they are not received, for in such one-sided prayer there is no sincerity. True prayer comes from strong desire, and from a like desire also comes work; both spring from the same source. Work is the natural companion to prayer. But if, on the other hand, we strive for a high ideal without prayer we make the tragic discovery that we have the aim without the strength to carry it out, sincerity yoked with ineffectiveness. Prayer implies a harmony—co-operation—between the human and the Divine; break this harmony and prayer is reduced to a form of words, which neither elevates nor sanctifies, "Words without thoughts never to Heaven go." Real

prayer consists, not in words, but in thoughts; it concentrates the mind upon the ideal, throws it open to the influences of the Eternal, gives it strength and purpose. In such prayer evil is overthrown, character is sweetened, and peace and joy are infused. Think not that peace or joy ever come to man easily; peace is the reward of inward victory, and joy is the after-glow of creation. Real communion with the Divine is a victory of the human spirit, and creation is the act of man which brings him nearest to God.

Some modern psychologists are very helpful in suggesting a view of man's nature which serves to explain the close, living relationship between man and the unseen world. There is a realm below the normal consciousness, of which we have no clear knowledge; we are dimly aware of a border-land between it and our full consciousness. Its existence is inferred from dreams, automatic action and memory, and it can be investigated by means of hypnosis. The line separating our consciousness from this unconscious, or subconscious mind, is not permanently fixed; it alters from time to time with the fluctuations in the level of our full consciousness. There is also a state of being of which we are not generally aware, which is an extension of our personality towards greater heights. This deeper life announces itself to

our consciousness by manifold hints or suggestions. At receptive moments we can feel a flow of ideas, creative imaginings and intuitions which appear strange to us because they seem so much better and wiser than those thoughts which we normally experience. Here also no sharp dividing barrier can be fixed marking the boundaries of this higher life; its limits vary.

Viewed by us our conscious life appears shut in, reduced, while at other times, its horizon enlarges. At moments, prized by the mystics, life suddenly expands; we feel as if barriers have been removed and for the time we really live. Such experiences cannot be described with any success—that is one of their specially recognized characteristics—but we can say that they bring the sense that a temporary unity has been achieved with a greater power; our normal consciousness becomes at one with something larger and deeper, suggesting the words of Jesus, “I and My Father are One.” Modern psychology may be useful in clearing up a seeming confusion in religious thought. It appears to the devotee that the influences, the intuitions and the aspirations, which are the basis of his religious life, come from a power very close to himself, but which is, nevertheless, distinct from his own personality. There is nearness and separation. Yet, to intelligence, it is apt

to be difficult to understand how these two can exist together. If the relationship were only spatial the difficulty would not arise, but when we recognize the symbolic character of the spatial terms used, then we find that it is difficult to conceive such a connection. It is easier to think in terms of a thorough-going Pantheism than to think of the human soul always touched by the Divine yet always distinct from it. Any form of Pantheism presents us with its own special difficulties; it tends to deify evil, and to weaken and confuse our sense of values. But in this connection, in spite of its intelligibility, it stands in opposition to the mystic consciousness that the inspiring power of our lives is different from ourselves. The nearer we think the Divine, the easier it is to think of it and ourselves in terms of identity, and the harder to think of the two in terms of division. This difficulty is often avoided by the use of the popular and vague term, "immanence"; the result often being the addition of confusion of thought to an original and real difficulty. Psychology's contribution is more clarifying. The power with which we come into contact in prayer is not ourselves, i.e. our normal selves; it is the larger, wider, enfolding life, which is not separated from us by any fixed boundaries. It is above our consciousness, yet in the act of prayer, or in acts which are not called prayer,

but which are of the same essential nature, we can at times enlarge our consciousness, and for a moment lose, not ourselves, but the *sense of self*, in a larger and fuller life. Our individuality is not lost, or surrendered; we remain ourselves; our ego is unaltered; but from it drop, as discarded garments, our self-consciousness, our hatred, our worries. In such mystic moments we experience joy as the triumphant fact of life. For an instant, we feel that we are sons, in our own right, of the King whose throne is the mind of man. The religious spirit insists that such moments of inspiration have a meaning and significance for thought which philosophy must not neglect. The value for a constructive philosophy of the outward splendors of the starry heavens has been already considered, but within consciousness there are experiences yet more profound; do these not also point to the significance of life?

There is much patronage of prayer by people who have no belief in its reality, but who look upon it as a good exercise for others to engage in. They think the belief in prayer is useful as steadying and easing the troubled mind. Prayer is thus regarded as a form of auto-suggestion, and its value is estimated in the same way as we should test the value of any other form of mental discipline. Such patronage cannot be accepted; the prayer which is thought to be

only auto-suggestion ceases to be prayer. Prayer is essentially an appeal to a Higher Power than ourselves. As long as the person praying believes in this Higher Power, and its influence over him, then all is well, be prayer auto-suggestion or something more; but dispel this belief, convince the man who is pouring out his soul, struggling to reach an ideal of holiness, that his passionate appeals are heard only by himself, and their character alters. For this worshiper the unbending ideal, the earnestness of devotion are no more. The thought of the Unseen Companion standing near has henceforth passed like a dream. In its place there remains only a mechanical and artificial endeavor to implant ideas in his unconscious, or subconscious, mind. The lightning flash bringing the sense of sin and remorse, or the triumphant joy of having thus enlarged and purified his being are gone. Prayer must be the communion of our souls with the Soul which enfolds us, and in whose Being we are immersed, or it must lose its definite characteristics, and cease to be worthy of the name of prayer.

There are some attitudes which are not called prayer, but which are really the same experience, though the idea and the significance of being in contact with a Greater Power than the normal consciousness of man may not be

fully developed. William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* mentions the case of a man who had lost all belief in formal religious ideas, but who maintained for many years a strong sense of being in contact with a Power who guided his actions, though he made no attempt to give his experience a definite place in his philosophy of life. The thinker engaged in solving a problem, the artist painting a picture, may enter into this deeper life which shines brightly in genius, and is sometimes not dim in ordinary men and women. Prayer means the ordering of our lives so that they can be responsive to the influences coming from a realm beyond our normal consciousness, but which is only separated from that consciousness by barriers, which can at times be partially removed or shifted farther back from our every-day selves. In prayer we bring our ideals and aspirations into an environment which is capable of providing nourishment for them. The ordering of our lives cannot be done at the direct command of our wills. This is the baffling paradox which always meets us on our quest. This inward order is allied to passion; it comes into being in self-forgetfulness. When they are full, and overflowing with enthusiasm, our lives spontaneously order themselves; they create their own orbits.

A thoughtful man or woman in the twentieth



century does not readily become convinced of the reality of prayer. At first prayer seems to clash with our conceptions of a natural order. We ask what special place can man have in these millions of worlds; science is apt to strike the soul, and its aspirations, with an icy coldness. Yet men do pray—men who have faced frankly all these problems and difficulties—why? Some pray because they have felt the need of prayer; without it there seemed to be a blank in their lives, and they argued that the recognition on their part of this blank showed that they had been living without an experience which was natural to their minds. Others have prayed because they could not help themselves. In the tragedies of life, when their strength had deserted them, they prayed as a last resource. When all other help and helpers fail our minds turn to prayer, and here we find comfort and strength. The problem of suffering remains dark; to it we can give no complete answer. Yet is there not great significance in this: so often through pain and sorrow we become convinced that the Divine is not far away, but is an Enfolding Spirit, sustaining our storm-tossed lives. In the storm we know ourselves more truly as we are—our weakness and our potential greatness.

## CHAPTER VI

# THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THEISM

THE answers which we give to present-day problems depend mainly on the estimate we form of human nature. Our view of man governs our conception of society: by our estimate of mankind we judge what is desirable and what is practicable in social organization. But our conception of human nature cannot be independent of our philosophy; our idea of the nature of the Universe governs our idea of man. Therefore, in an ultimate and final sense, our political principles, both national and international, are related to our religion and philosophy. The details of applied politics, questions of parties and leaders, and of legislation and administration, cannot be investigated as if they were deducible by logic from our theory of the Universe; they depend upon history; they are settled by national tradition and social customs; they are modified by the varying

personalities of politicians and their supporters. It is in the consideration of the questions which lie behind these details that we discover the necessity of a religious foundation for our schemes of reform. Our attempts to create a better society rest upon the assumption of certain fundamental principles: these truths, as we hold them, constitute for us a social faith, which even if it is not definitely formulated, is at least implied in our activity.

It may be urged in opposition to this view that many of the keenest social workers have been hostile or indifferent to a religious view of life, while the Church has often been on the side of oppression. This is true, but it does not weaken the argument. People act from a variety of motives, and are guided by many aims, and it is not sufficient for us to label them according to the particular form of religion which they happen to profess, nor should religion be considered as being limited to its official and orthodox forms. We have seen that during the nineteenth century, a long and at times bitter struggle has been waged against the Church because that institution wished to confine men's minds to false or inadequate statements of belief. We have seen also that some of the deepest thought of that century was directed to the formation of a religion which should be more in harmony with the discoveries

of science. Many of these thinkers and teachers were also social reformers. But the question remains why the social reformer was so often a person professing no particular religious belief. Part of the answer may be: because Christian Churches in general were so much concerned with the salvation of individuals, an excellent work; indeed, the supreme work if we are "members one of another." Nevertheless, this gospel was generally expressed in language which was difficult to really understand and grasp. Again, in its popular aspect, too often this evangelical gospel was interpreted as, "Get saved yourself and make sure you are going to heaven. That is every man's chief concern. This life does not really matter, so there is no need to trouble about the conditions in which other people work and live." It was natural that men who were in revolt against a system of society should carry that principle of rebellion from society to society's religion. The man with a critical or destructive mind does not limit that mind's activity to the particular work of criticism on which he is engaged at the moment; it tends to become a temperament, and so it colors his whole life and activity. Another cause is that the case against religion is often capable of being expressed more directly and forcibly than the other side. This was particularly true during the Evolutionary Period of

thought. The case against religion is founded on arguments only; whereas religion bases its claims both on reason and inward experience. It is often necessary in life for experience to precede our steps with a lighted lantern and show reason the way of life; otherwise reason turns to the right or the left, and we are lost in the swamps of despair. In any given society there is generally a wide agreement upon moral principles; this unwritten code forms the basis of action for people in so far as their acts arise from definite conviction. Such a code existed in England during the nineteenth century; it was not constant during the whole of that century, for certain changes were indeed taking place from time to time, but there were some continuing characteristics: admiration for men who did things—philanthropists in particular—a belief in justice and fair play and a demand for sincerity may be mentioned. Such ideas influenced people of all kinds of religious belief and none; they constituted a standard in thought by which even those who did not act up to these ideas themselves generally judged others. Whence came such moral ideas? Most were derived from portions of the Bible, that collection of Eastern Literature which has become the ethical and religious classic of our Western civilization. It matters not that the writers of the many books bound together under

that name drew from earlier sources, and that the social and moral ideas expressed are representative of many different cultural levels, or that many modern people and nations in their actions represent ideas of much lower order than the teaching of Jesus; our code still remains, at its best, a Bible code. We see how true this is if we consider the probable direct influence of other ancient religions on our social life during last century. Brahmanism has had some influence; the influence of Buddhism has been stronger, yet how small when compared with Jewish-Christian thought. In day school and Sunday school the Bible is read; it is the one great literature of which the majority of people have any knowledge whatsoever. Disbelief in the theology of the Bible does not take the Free Thinker into a realm where its moral ideas have no control; the half-Christian ideas of our time remain as an atmosphere which neither Atheist, Theist nor Christian can fail to breathe. We cannot judge of the social effects of a general disbelief in the "God idea" from the lives of a few Atheists, or Agnostics, who deny or doubt its truth, but who unavoidably remain living in a civilization whose highest moral ideals originated as an organic part of the "God idea."

The fundamental question for all social reformers is whether human life is worth developing. Increased knowledge brings in many

ways a greater capacity to suffer physical and mental pain. The sadness of bereavement, mental anguish, nervous disorders and loneliness are the product of increased sensibility. Social reformers advocate shorter hours, better conditions of labor, and above all, superior education. Such reforms will give men more time for thought, and a greater capacity for thinking. These advantages, however, will cause the tragedies of human life to stand out in greater relief: life's tragedies cannot be escaped by a reconstruction of society, for the tragic is within us. It may be asked, "Is it not better to keep the masses in ignorance of that deeper tragedy which is revealed to the cultivated mind, and for their own good let them think of the oppression of their rulers, and thereby keep their minds from brooding on the awful fate of man crushed by the immensity of matter." The social reformer answers with indignation, "No." But why? His answer implies a belief that in spite of the failures of history, in spite of the sins of mankind, man is right at heart, that the development and enlargement of his faculties is worth while, and will not lead him astray. It means that the social reformer accepts life as a good thing in itself, and thinks that the more fully developed it is the better. This is a gigantic assumption, and one that leads us much beyond man's finite nature. It becomes a trust

in the Universe which has produced man, for man's faculties lead him to that Universe; his understanding of the natural order makes him see himself as a conscious being who is to some extent able to understand nature's laws; his sense of the beauty in nature conducts his mind to the idea of a source of beauty, for the power of perception of beauty within us seems linked to a beauty written in the Universe, nay, growing, living as an integral part of that Universe; his passionate aspirations lead him to prayer, and to his deepest prayer he feels a response as if a power akin to himself were standing at the threshold of his consciousness awaiting admittance, knocking at the door. According to a naturalistic philosophy, man developed by education, with ample leisure to think, would be left with outstretched arms towards:—

That inverted Bowl we call the Sky,  
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,

with a feeling of emptiness within his starved spirit. He would try and find some way of escape; strange superstitions would grow within his mind, and vast mythologies would spring up. It was written of old, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God"; and if the scorching sun of intellectualism dried up all the fresh-running brooks, man would turn to drink at the stag-



nant pools of superstition. The argument may be summarized: social reform implies a belief in human life, but the nature of man is such that he has needs greater than any well-organized society can supply; those needs imply a Universe, which having produced man, responds to those human needs, i.e. *in simple ordinary language, they imply a belief in God.*

There are other implications to be considered, less fundamental, indeed, but still of vast importance. The social reformer is moved by a feeling of indignation against his own and others' wrongs, and also in many cases by an emotion of love towards his fellows. This emotion of love cannot be limited to the love of mankind; it tends to embrace the animals, but also powers greater than man. The attention given to the rights of animals by many people holding a negative philosophy of life suggests that the emotion of love has not been able to find expression in religion, and not being completely satisfied with the love of human beings, it has gone to intensify the regard for animals. Love, in its fullest manifestations, cannot be satisfied with the finite; from the family it passes to the nation and becomes patriotism; it enlarges its bounds and becomes internationalism, and then still unsatisfied it looks for more realms to conquer. There are other realms of the spirit, about which philosophy reasons and

the reality of which religion tests by experience. The crowning attitude of human life is reached when the affections become focused here, and man gives to the Divine his love, or something akin to love. This does not mean, of necessity, an other-worldly attitude, for God does not live in a distant heaven, beyond our reach; his realm is one in which space is not, so man is nearer to the Divine than nearness:—

But God is never so far off  
As even to be near,  
He is within, our spirit is  
The home he holds most dear.

The love of mankind expressed by the social reformer is a part of an expanding ideal, and an emotion created in us through that ideal; it is a natural growth, and to set artificial limits to its development is ultimately to stifle its life. This love claims the whole of being as belonging to it by its legitimate right; for it to accept less would be to deny its own nature. From this point of view we can see that social reform is the road by which some reach religion. The reformers must find an object for love which is great enough for their capacities for love, and there is only one such subject, called, indeed, by many names: it is the ground of our being, the inspiration of our ideals, and perhaps, the eternal goal of our finite selves. But the other

side is also true, the fullness of our love for man, whose character often presents a most unlovable aspect, depends on the love-passion being exercised in a Universe which seems to us to be worthy of it. The most ready deduction from a naturalistic philosophy is contained in Tennyson's words:—

What is it all, but the trouble of ants  
In the gleam of a million million of suns.

There is not much room for the growth of the spirit of universal love in reflective, self-conscious, cultured beings in such a Universe.

Another implication of our theory is that the organization of society must be plastic, capable of change. Man was not created perfect and then left for ever to remain in his perfection. Man is yet in the process of being created, his incompleteness disturbs the clearness of his mind. Shelley says in *The Pine Forest of the Cascine*:—

Sweet views, which in our world above  
Can never well be seen,  
Were imaged by the water's love  
Of that fair forest green.

And all was interfused beneath  
With an Elysian air,  
An atmosphere without a breath,  
A silence sleeping there.

Until a wandering wind crept by,  
Like an unwelcome thought,  
Which from my mind's too faithful eye  
Blots thy bright image out.

For thou art good and dear and kind,  
The forest ever green,  
But less of peace in S——'s mind,  
Than calm in waters seen.

This is tragic, indeed, if such sadness be not the gateway to life, if joy does not triumph over the sorrows of man. If man is as yet unfinished can we presume to make for him a civilization which shall be itself complete? His incompleteness means that his organizations and institutions must be incomplete also; more, their greatest excellence is that they give him room to grow. All attempts to describe a state of future happiness fail, because in our present degree of development, we desire adventure, growth, conquest and creation, and no perfection of organization can promise us these. Descriptions of heaven simply bore us; books about Utopias have greater interest, but chiefly because of the ingenuity of the details; we do not really desire to live under such static and finished conditions; we feel that after a few years we should grow tired of life. Man's deepest ambition is to create, fashioning things of use and beauty as he is moved to desire them;

and the organization of society which gives his creative faculties most scope, the one in which he possesses, or rather achieves, the maximum of control over his own work is the one which would be the most natural social interpretation of the ideas of this book. Those ideas are expressed more fully by the craftsman than by the mechanic or the organizer. Machinery and organization are necessary, but the builders of our Norman and Gothic cathedrals better embody our social ideals, which are freedom and the creation of beauty. Work is primarily a means of obtaining sustenance, and the first purpose of society is the maintenance of law and order; but it makes all the difference if the work done is such that the workman can feel a joy in his craft. No legal system can give us what, from a social standpoint, we most need: the sense of the value and joy of work; that comes from within; it is part of life's great secret. Nevertheless, alterations in the legal and governmental system and the encouragement of co-operation may help to give man greater freedom to create objects of use and beauty.

## CHAPTER VII

### MUST WE PART WITH GOD?

IT now remains to bring together all the arguments set out in the preceding chapters, and to view them in relationship to the title: "Must We Part with God?" These arguments are closely connected one with another and they must be treated as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Thoughtful men and women of the present day entertain very divergent opinions on the ultimate questions, but in spite of this divergence these opinions are reducible to two main types, for they express, with greater or less clearness, either the naturalistic or the theistic view. They are the norms of thought; other types generally tend towards one or other of these. The Agnostic proposes that we should assume an attitude of neutrality, but as has been shown<sup>2</sup> this attitude is unstable and the ten-

<sup>1</sup> "The strength of the argument for Theism consists in the convergence of several lines of thought."—Bishop Temple in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, Vol. I, page 417.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter III.

dency is for it to become definitely naturalistic, or vaguely theistic. Pantheism fares no better.<sup>1</sup> The term is ambiguous and we must get behind the word to what its users wish to denote by it. What kind of a Universe is it that they deify? Is it one in which all can be reduced to Substance, which is below the level of our personality? such ideas will tend to possess the faults of Naturalism. On the other hand, if the user of the word wishes to denote a Universe which is a system possessing definite levels, in the totality of which our moral and spiritual values are both nurtured and preserved, then he may call such a system "Pantheism," but nevertheless, it will possess the chief features of Theism. The use of the word Pantheism in this latter case serves but little more than to protest against the crude conception of God as a kind of despotic ruler.

Thus we can see that two main views of life must be considered; these can be clearly contrasted. Naturalism regards every problem from the view-point of the origin of the objects considered; if this origin can be explained, then we have the key to the problem's solution. If by origin, we mean with the Idealist an object's complete setting in the Universe, as suggested by Tennyson's lines:—

<sup>1</sup>Pages 22 to 24 and 74. Also Dr. F. C. S. Schiller's *Problems of Belief*, page 141.

Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but *if* I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

—then we need not object. But this is not the meaning; origin in this case means the evolution of matter under chance conditions. Complex forms come from simple ones and these from still simpler, and so on.

Theism starts at the reverse end and tries to view the Universe from the point of view of its goal. If this, the goal of our evolution, be hidden from the mind's sight, then we must consider all those levels of life which seem to us to be nearest to the goal; those thoughts and actions which we speak of as being highest and noblest.<sup>1</sup> For such levels of being possess within themselves, and partly reveal, the spiritual trend of our evolution. This is the method followed in this book. The forward push reveals the man, his aims, ambitions, hopes and aspirations. The nature of the Universe, the deeper reality which lies behind man's normal life, is in part revealed by the lives and thoughts of philosophers, scientists, poets and artists and all others who live life deeply. They are for us the forward push of the Universe.

<sup>1</sup>Pages 27 to 38.



Naturalism fails to give an explanation of human life. Everything is finally reduced to physics and chemistry, and consequently, all that exists on levels higher than matter is only partially and inadequately explained. If we part with God and accept a naturalistic philosophy, we shall find that we are still in the possession of faculties which we have esteemed as being of the highest order, but which we are now unable to regard as being embodied in the Universal Life, their appearance in man being attributed to chance. They are produced, it is true, by the Universe, yet without aim, will or purpose. Their existence is precarious and is not guaranteed by the inner nature of the Cosmic Process. Man is thus a product of evolution, yet at the same time, man, who possesses thought, emotion and will, has reached a higher level than the whole of which he is a part. Man, as regards his physical life, is a child of the Universe, but considered from the point of view of his aspirations and deeper intuitions, he is an orphan in the Universe which has produced him. Under these conditions would our ideals and values remain unchanged?<sup>1</sup> The consistent social reformer must be ultimately an optimist, but what guarantee of optimism does Naturalism give? The religious mind desires to culti-

<sup>1</sup> See Earl Balfour's treatment of this subject in *Theism and Humanism*.

vate the sense of unity with all; Naturalism limits that unity to the bio-chemical level—even this it tries to reduce to simpler terms. It is thus that Naturalism writes down life's meaning in trying to describe the facts of consciousness in terms relating to levels lower than itself.<sup>1</sup>

*We must believe in God, i.e. in a theistic interpretation of the Universe, because the facts of reason and experience point in that direction.* It must be remembered, however, that in using the term, "God," we do not claim for the word an exact connotation.<sup>2</sup> It is used to express the being and significance of the Universe; but such a conception is largely beyond our limited grasp, and consequently the term has the richness, fullness and suggestiveness of poetry rather than the exactness required of scientific terminology. Our varied experiences of life force us to notice the fact that we value certain knowledge, emotions and activities above others, arranging them according to a scale of values.<sup>3</sup> We tend to put truth-seeking, beauty-loving and goodness in the highest places. It may appear on first thoughts that the Theist's assumption that such aspects of life bear a closer relationship to the Ultimate Reality than

<sup>1</sup> See Viscount Haldane's *Reign of Relativity*, page 174.

<sup>2</sup> Pages 59 and 60.

<sup>3</sup> Pages 60 and 61.

matter is unwarranted. But, in the case of some of our truth-seeking activities, we are able to test them by results which carry the conviction of their objective validity. Science, in particular Astronomy,<sup>1</sup> shows us the range and understanding of the human intellect. In spite of a few extreme forms of Philosophic Idealism,<sup>2</sup> man will not believe that the material Universe is merely the creation of the individual or social mind of man; its existence is independent of *our* thinking. But, however, to the extent that we must regard matter as being prior to, and independent of, our conscious thinking, is the force of the argument augmented that our understanding of nature reveals the harmony of our minds with the Ultimate Reality.<sup>3</sup> Reason, however, is not a separate and isolated faculty of our personality. Man is normally a unity.<sup>4</sup> If mind can be shown to possess the power to make valid judgments, is not our sense of duty also valid, and do not our appreciations of the beautiful possess an element of ultimate value? *Man's scientific successes thus give the whole of his deepest thoughts and judgments a "validity-claim."*

<sup>1</sup> Pages 53 to 56.

<sup>2</sup> Subjective Idealism and Neo-Idealism.

<sup>3</sup> It does not greatly matter whether the philosophic attitude above suggested be described as "Spiritual Realism" or "Objective Idealism."

<sup>4</sup> Pages 36 to 38.

Such a religion has a twofold aspect:—

1. The personal relationship to a greater life than we normally experience, i.e. prayer.<sup>1</sup>

2. The basis for social activity.<sup>2</sup>

1. Prayer is the center of the religious life; without prayer it loses its most vital characteristics. Yet the attitude of prayer is exposed to the most serious criticism. The Universe seems to be an ordered whole. Considered from a scientific standpoint, we find little to suggest that God acts in the world in the way that the ordinary religious ideas regarding prayer assert. Nevertheless, our loftier aspirations, our intenser experiences, those of deep joy and tragic sorrow, do often lead us to an attitude which we may here call “prayer” and that attitude brings its own conviction, its own evidence of truth. We accept as a working hypothesis, as an act of faith,<sup>3</sup> that such experiences do lead us indeed into the realization of a fuller life and that these experiences represent for us an insight into a deeper level of reality.

2. The basis of social activity is (a) optimism—not of necessity optimism regarding this or that cause—but concerning life itself, and (b) the belief that what we call the “higher values” are in actuality higher, i.e. more ex-

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup> Pages 46 to 48.

pressive of the fundamental nature of the Universe, and therefore, in the complete sense of the word, *trustworthy*. The social reformer who is at heart a pessimist, who regards our values as having no extra-human validity, is building his New Commonwealth in the desert where it is isolated from the rest of the Universe. Its separation from the Cosmic Life will in turn bring the sense of loneliness and ultimate futility. The belief in the purposelessness of nature will weaken the sense of purpose in man.

Our individual and social activity alike are directed towards God, our deepest and highest aspirations have meaning for us only as they give us an insight, limited indeed, blurred and obscure indeed, yet an insight real as He is real. *We must conclude, therefore, that man must not, cannot, part with God; for to part with God is to deny the Reality which is the source of our aspirations and the goal of our activities.*

This is a book of hope. No systematic philosophy or theology has been advocated, and adherence has not been suggested to any particular organization—whence then the hope of man? We are children of a Universe which is full of beauty and wonder; neither the telescope has exhausted its vastness nor the microscope its minuteness. But we are children not only of its material greatness: our minds look within and see the harmony of law; we

feel the beauty and wonder of nature as something *we* can appreciate and enjoy, as something personal to ourselves.<sup>1</sup> The Universe is capable of drawing our minds onwards to the conception of the whole, and inspiring our love towards the source of that eternal beauty which elevates the senses and grips the mind. Man's hope is not in any finished religious or political system; his hope is the adventurous joy of the spirit, the acceptance of the Great Adventure, the conquest of the mind and the creation of beauty. Mankind needs to-day the re-conviction that the eternal things abide, and the trust that such conviction comes at last to those who face life in a prayerful spirit and with a mind full of determination to break through the difficulties and doubts which beset it. Thought and experience will reveal the way. Our freedom and our hope must be won by struggle, otherwise they can never be really ours; freedom and hope cannot be bought, nor inherited, nor received as gifts; they must be won. This war-weary world must take up the higher warfare once again, for here alone can the real peace be won—in the minds of men. Christianity stirred and shook men with the thunder and lightning of a mighty ideal; its garments of myth and legend are falling away, but its

<sup>1</sup> Compare with Principal L. P. Jack's pamphlet, *Agnosticism from a Unitarian Point of View*.

soul remains. The Religion of Aspiration and Reason, in which the soul of Jesus and the Early Church still lives, must be a religion of challenge, or spiritual aggression and victory; herein alone can we win joy and peace, herein alone is there hope.





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